CLAIMS

1. A method of awarding a prize in a gaming system including a plurality of game consoles comprising the steps of providing a trigger value derived from a random variable having a non-uniform distribution, periodically receiving count data from each game console, being data representing at least one parameter of a game console, calculating a total value representing the total count data received, comparing the total value with the trigger value, transmitting a prize instruction signal to an output means if the total value has a predetermined relationship with the trigger value, whereby the prize instruction signal results in at least one game console issuing a prize.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the non-uniform distribution is a geometric distribution.

3. The method as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein the prize instruction signal is output from the output means to at least one game console.

4. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the prize instruction signal includes a prize display signal and a game console signal for updating one or more of the game consoles.

5. The method as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein the output means is connected to a display means which indicates that a prize has been won by the at least one game console.

6. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the random variable is added to a predetermined offset value to produce the trigger value.

7. The method as claimed in claim 6 wherein the offset value is calculated and stored in a memory location prior to addition to the random variable.

8. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the random variable has a distribution which is modified by a function to generate a value with a geometric distribution.

9. The method as claimed in claim 8 wherein the function includes an inverse geometric distribution.

10. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the prize is determined independently of the count data.

11. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the prize instruction signal is output to the gaming console from which count data was received which resulted in the total value having the predetermined relationship with the trigger value.

12. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein count data is collected synchronously with game play on each gaming console.

13. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 11 wherein count data is collected asynchronously with game play on at least one gaming console.

14. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the predetermined relationship is that the total value is equal to or greater than the trigger value.

15. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 13 wherein the predetermined relationship is that the total value is related to the trigger value through a mathematical relationship.

16. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the count data represents one game played on one game console.

17. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 15 wherein the count data includes any one or more of the following parameters:

a predetermined amount of money spent on a gaming console, a predetermined number of indicia arrangements on a gaming console, a predetermined combination of events on different gaming consoles, each time a gaming console is played, a predetermined turnover of gaming consoles, a predetermined function of turnover, one event occurring on one or more game consoles.

18. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims including a loyalty system including transaction terminals whereby every time a customer makes a transaction count data is transmitted to a central console whereby a person has a chance of winning a jackpot.

19. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims including a controller, a trigger value generator, a jackpot triggering means and a display means separate from each gaming console.

20. The method as claimed in claim 19 wherein the system includes a storage means for storing count data.

21. The method as claimed in claim 20 including the step of providing an accumulator for totaling the count data stored in the storage means.

22. The method as claimed in claim 21 wherein the controller provides the random trigger value.

23. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims including the step of providing a new random trigger value at a predetermined time interval.

24. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 22, wherein a new random trigger value is provided after at least one game controller issues a prize.

25. The method as claimed in claim 1 including the step of calculating a random value having one probability distribution and transforming the random value by a predetermined function to generate a random value with a different probability distribution.

26. The method as claimed in claim 6 wherein the offset value is set at the current total value.

27. A controller for use in a gaming system, the controller comprising a trigger value, a generator for generating a random trigger value at predetermined times, a receiver for receiving count data from each game console, being data representing at least one parameter of a game console, a calculating means for calculating a

total value representing the total count data received by the receiver, a comparator for comparing the total value with the trigger value and a processor for outputting a prize signal to at least one game console if the total value has a predetermined relationship with the trigger value.

28. The controller as claimed in claim 27 wherein the processor is adapted to output a prize signal to the game console from which count data was received which resulted in the total value having the predetermined relationship with a trigger value.

29. The controller as claimed in claim 27 wherein the trigger value generator is adapted to periodically select a value of a random variable, calculate an offset value and add this to the random variable to produce the trigger value.

30. The controller as claimed in any one of claims 27 to 29 wherein the trigger value is determined independently of turnover of the gaming system.

31. The controller as claimed in any one of claims 27 to 30 wherein the random variable has a minimum value of 1.

32. A gaming system comprising a plurality of game consoles, a trigger value generator for generating a trigger value, a prize triggering means, and a controller which is adapted to periodically receive count data from each game console, being data representing at least one parameter of a game console, calculate a total value representing the total count data received by the receiver and compare the total value with the trigger value and operate the prize triggering means to transmit a prize instruction signal to at least one game console if the total value has a predetermined relationship with the trigger value.

33. The gaming system as claimed in claim 32 wherein the controller is adapted to operate the prize trigger means to transmit the prize instruction signal to

one of the game consoles from which count data was received which resulted in the total value having the predetermined relationship with the trigger value.

34. The gaming system as claimed in claim 32 or 33 wherein the trigger value is derived from a random variable having a non-uniform distribution.

35. The gaming system as claimed in claim 34 wherein the non-uniform distribution is a geometric distribution.

36. The method as claimed in claim 35 wherein the random variable is added to a predetermined offset value to produce the trigger value.

37. A gaming system substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figures 1, 2 or 3 of the accompanying drawings.

39. A method of awarding a prize in a gaming system substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figures 1, 2 or 3 of the accompanying drawings.

40. A controller for use in a gaming system substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figures 1, 2 or 3 of the accompanying drawings.

41. A method of awarding a prize in a gaming system including at least one game console comprising the steps of providing a random trigger value, periodically receiving count data from one game console, being data representing at least one parameter of the game console, calculating a total value representing the total count data received, comparing the total value with the trigger value, transmitting a prize instruction signal to an output means if the total value has a predetermined relationship with the trigger value, whereby the prize instruction signal results in at least one game console issuing a prize.

42. The method of awarding a prize as claimed in claim 41 wherein the random trigger value is derived from a random variable having a non-uniform distribution.

43. The method as claimed in claim 41 or 42 wherein the prize instruction signal is transmitted independent of count data received during an elapsed period.

44. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 43 wherein the system includes a plurality of game consoles.

45. The method as claimed in claim 44 including an accumulator means for accumulating count data separately for each game console.

46. The method as claimed in claim 45 including a totaliser means for calculating a total value representing the total count data stored in the accumulator for each game console.

47. The method as claimed in claim 46 wherein each total value calculated by the totalizer is compared with the trigger value and a prize instruction signal is transmitted to the output means if any one or more of the total values has a predetermined relationship with a trigger value.

48. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 47 wherein the predetermined relationship with a trigger value includes any one or more of:

the total value is equal to the trigger value;

the total value is greater than the trigger value;

the total value is a multiple of the trigger value;

the total value is related to the trigger value through a mathematical relationship.

49. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 48 wherein the count data is indicative of the amount wagered on one game console.

50. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 49 wherein count data is received from the at least one game console each time an amount is wagered on the at least one game console.

51. The method as claimed in claim 50 wherein the total value is recalculated each time count data is received from the at least one game console.

52. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 50 wherein the output means is connected to a display means which indicates that a prize has been won by the at least one game console.

53. The method as claimed in claim 52 wherein the display means includes a visual display separate from the at least one game console.

54. The method as claimed in any one of claims 43 to 53 when not dependant on claim 42 wherein the random trigger value is derived from a random variable having a non-uniform distribution.

55. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 54 including the step of providing a plurality of random trigger values with each trigger value being associated with a respective gaming console.

56. The method as claimed in claim 42 or 54 wherein the non-uniform distribution is a geometric distribution.

57. The method as claimed in claim 43 when appended to claim 42 wherein the random variable is added to a predetermined offset value to produce the random trigger value.

58. The method as claimed in claim 57 wherein the offset value is calculated and stored in a memory location prior to addition to the random variable.

59. The method as claimed in claim 43 or 58 wherein the random variable has a distribution which is modified by a function to generate a value with a geometric distribution.

60. The method as claimed in claim 59 wherein the function includes an inverse geometric distribution.

61. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 59 wherein the value of the prize is determined independently of the count data.

62. The method as claimed in claim 61 wherein the value of the prize is determined independently of turnover occurring within a predetermined period of time.

63. The method as claimed in claim 61 wherein the count data is collected synchronously with game play on the or each game console.

64. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 63 wherein the comparing step is performed synchronously with playing the gaming console.

65. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 63 wherein the comparing step is performed asynchronously with playing the gaming console.

66. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 63 wherein the comparing step is performed synchronously with receiving count data.

67. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 63 wherein the comparing step is performed asynchronously with receiving count data.

68. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 67 wherein the count data represents any one of the following:

one game played on one game console, multiple games played on one game console, one event occurring on one game console.

69. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 67 wherein the count data includes any one of the following:

a predetermined amount wagered on a gaming console;

a predetermined number of indicia arrangements on a gaming console;

a predetermined combination of events on different gaming consoles;

a predetermined turnover of one or more gaming consoles;

a predetermined function of turnover.

70. The method as claimed in any one of claims

41 to 69 including the step of providing a new random trigger value at a predetermined time.

71. The method as claimed in claim 70 wherein the new random trigger value is provided for one game console after a prize is issued to that game console.

72. The method as claimed in claim 42 or 55 including calculating a random value having one probability distribution and transforming the random value by a predetermined function to generate a random value with a different probability distribution.

73. The method as claimed in claim 72 wherein the random value is generated by a pseudo random number generator.

74. The method as claimed in any one claims 41 to 73 wherein the trigger value is reset more frequently than once per output of the prize instruction signal.

75. The method as claimed in claim 57 wherein the offset value is set to the current total value.

76. The method as claimed in claim 75 wherein the offset value and the random value are selected and a trigger value reset whenever a prize instruction signal is sent to the game console.

77. The method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 76 wherein the count data is reset to a predetermined number after a prize instruction signal is output.

78. The method as claimed in claim 77 wherein the random value is recalculated after the prize instruction signal is output whereby the trigger value is greater than or equal to the total value.

79. A controller for use in a gaming system, the controller including a trigger value, a generator for generating a random trigger value at predetermined times, a receiver for receiving count data from one game console, being data representing at least one parameter of the game console, a calculating means for calculating a total value representing the total count data received by the

receiver, a comparator for comparing the total value with the trigger value and a processor for outputting a prize signal to the one game console if the total value has a predetermined relationship with the trigger value.

80. The controller as claimed in claim 79 wherein the generator is adapted to select a value of a random variable, calculate an offset value and add this to the random value to produce the random trigger value.

81. The controller as claimed in claim 80 wherein the trigger value is determined independent of turnover of the gaming system.

82. The controller as claimed in claim 81 wherein the random value has a minimum value of one.

83. The controller as claimed in any one of claims 80 to 82 wherein the receiver is adapted to receive count data from a plurality of game consoles and store the count data in separate memory locations associated with each game console and the calculating means includes an accumulator for calculating a total value for each game console and the comparator is adapted to compare the total value for each game console with the trigger value.

84. The controller as claimed in any one of claims 79 to 82 wherein a prize signal is output from the processor to the one game console if the total value is equal to or greater than the trigger value.

85. The controller as claimed in any one of claims 80 to 84 wherein the count data includes any one of the group of:

a predetermined amount wagered on a gaming console;

a predetermined number of indicia arrangements on a gaming console;

a predetermined combination of events on different gaming consoles;

a predetermined turnover of one or more gaming consoles;

a predetermined function of turnover.

86. The controller as claimed in any one of claims 80 to 85 which is configured to be located remotely from the or each game console.

87. A gaming system comprising at least one game console, a trigger value generator for generating a trigger value, a prize triggering means, and a controller which is adapted to periodically receive count data from one game console, being data representing at least one parameter of each game console, store count data for each game console in a different memory location, calculate a total value representing the total count data received by the receiver for each game console and compare the total value for each game console with the trigger value and operate the prize triggering means to transmit a prize instruction signal to the gaming console which has a total value having a predetermined relationship with the trigger value.

88. The gaming system as claimed in claim 87 wherein the trigger value generator comprises a plurality of trigger values each associated with a respective one of the game consoles.

89. The gaming system as claimed in claim 88 wherein the trigger value is determined independently of count data received over a predetermined period of time.

90. The gaming system as claimed in claim 88 or 89 wherein the trigger value is derived from a random variable which is added to an offset value.

91. The gaming system as claimed in claim 90 wherein the random value is calculated based on a parameter indicative of the probability of a win.

92. The gaming system as claimed in claim 91 wherein the trigger value is selected independently of an amount wagered on the or each gaming console over an elapsed period.

93. The method as claimed in claim 92 wherein the controller is located externally from the at least one game console.

94. The gaming system as claimed in claim 93 wherein the trigger value generator generates the random value with one probability distribution and transforms the random value by a predetermined function to generate a random value with a different probability distribution.

95. The gaming system as claimed in any one of claims 89 to 94 wherein the prize triggering means includes a prize setting means which is adapted to set the value of the prize awarded to the game console receiving the prize instruction signal based on a fixed value determined before count data is received from the or each game console.

96. A computer program which is configured to perform the method as claimed in any one of claims 41 to 78.

97. A computer storage medium which is adapted to store the computer program as claimed in claim in claim 96.

98. A method substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figures 4 to 6 of the accompanying drawings.

99. A controller substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figures 4 to 6 of the accompanying drawings.

100. A gaming system substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figures 4 to 6 of the accompanying drawings.

101. A computer program configured to operate a gaming system substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figures 4 to 6 of the accompanying drawings.